

Introduction to the Life of Saint Malachy of Armagh



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Introduction to the Life of Saint Malachy of Armagh, by H. J. Lawlor, D.D., Litt.D., 1920

The main purpose of this Introduction is to give an account of a movement which changed the whole face of the Irish Church, and to the advancement of which Saint Malachy devoted his life. In default of a better word we may call the movement a Reformation, though it might perhaps be more accurately described as an ecclesiastical revolution. Without some knowledge of its aims and progress it is impossible to assign to Malachy his true place in the history of his native country.

That such a movement actually took place in the twelfth century is beyond doubt. From about the year 1200 on it is certain that the organization of the Church of Ireland was similar to that of the other Churches of western Christendom. The country was divided into dioceses; and each diocese had a bishop as its ruler, and a Cathedral Church in which the bishop's stool was placed. The Cathedral Church, moreover, had a chapter of clergy, regular or secular, who performed important functions in the diocese. But up to the end of the eleventh century all these things were unknown among the Irish. The constitution of the Church was then of an entirely different type, one that had no exact parallel elsewhere. The passage from the older to the newer organization must have taken place in the twelfth century. During that century, therefore, there was a Reformation in the Irish Church, however little we may know of its causes or its process. But this Reformation was no mere re-modelling of the hierarchy. It can be shown that it imposed on the members of the Church a new standard of sexual morality; if we believe contemporary writers, it

restored to their proper place such rites as Confession, Confirmation and Matrimony; it substituted for the offices of divine service previously in use those of the Roman Church; it introduced the custom of paying tithes; it established in Ireland the monastic orders of Latin Christendom; and it may have produced changes in other directions. But I propose to confine myself to the change in the constitution of the Church, which was its most striking feature. The subject, even thus narrowed, will give us more than can be satisfactorily treated in a few pages.

First, I must emphasize the assertion made a moment ago that the constitution of the Irish Church in the eleventh century was *sui generis*. Let us begin by reminding ourselves what it was from the sixth to the eighth century. It was then essentially monastic in character. The rulers of the Church were the abbots of the monasteries, commonly known as the coarbs or successors of their founders. These abbots were sometimes bishops; but whether they were bishops or of lower rank in the ministry, their authority was inherent in their office of coarb. At this period bishops were numerous - more numerous than in later medieval or modern times; and certain functions were reserved for bishops, for example, ordination. No ecclesiastic, of whatever status, could perform such functions, unless he was of the episcopal order. But no bishop, as such, had jurisdiction. The bishops were often subordinate officers in monasteries, revered because of their office, but executing their special functions at the command of the abbots. Sometimes a bishop was attached to a single tribe. Sometimes a group of bishops - often seven in number - dwelt together in one place. But in no case, I repeat, had they jurisdiction. Thus ecclesiastical authority was vested in the abbots. The episcopate was bestowed on certain individuals as a personal distinction. Thus the bishops, if they were not also abbots, had only such

influence on the affairs of the Church as their sanctity, or their learning, might give them.

It may surprise some that so anomalous a system of government should have persisted as late as the eleventh century, in other words for a period of over 500 years. But we must take account of the Danish - or as we should rather call it, the Norse - invasion of Ireland. Danish ships first appeared off the Irish coasts about the year 800. From that time for two centuries Ireland was to a large extent cut off from intercourse with the rest of Europe. The aim of the northern hordes, as it seems, was not mere pillage, but the extinction of Christianity. Ecclesiastical institutions were everywhere attacked, and often destroyed. And these institutions were centres of scholarship. Heretofore Ireland had been the special home of learning, and had attracted to itself large numbers of foreign students. But in those disastrous centuries its culture was reduced to the lowest point. In such circumstances it was not possible that the organization of the Church should be developed or strengthened. The Danish domination of the country must have tended to stereotype the old hierarchical system. It might, indeed, suffer from deterioration: it probably did. But it could not be assimilated to the system which then prevailed on the Continent. We should expect that the constitution of the Church in the eleventh century, whatever abuses may have crept into its administration, would in principle be identical with that of the pre-Danish period.

There can in fact be no doubt that it was. We have in our hands writings of Lanfranc, Anselm, Saint Bernard and Giraldus Cambrensis which picture the state of the Irish Church at that time. They speak of it in terms which are by no means complimentary. But when they come to details we discover that the irregularities in its hierarchical arrangement which shocked them most went back to the

days of Saint Columba. Quotations cannot be given here. But the reader will probably find in the Life printed below, and the authorities referred to in the notes, sufficient proof that the constitution of the Irish Church in 1100 was in the main a following, though perhaps a corrupt following, of that of the sixth century.

There was indeed one abuse in the Irish Church of the tenth and eleventh centuries of which few traces are found before the Danish invasion. We learn from Saint Bernard that the abbots of Armagh were the representatives of a single family, and held office, as of right, by hereditary succession. There is reason to believe that this evil custom was not peculiar to Armagh. According to Saint Bernard, it was the gravest departure from Catholic tradition of which the Irish Church was guilty, and the parent of many evils. We shall hear more of it in the sequel. For the moment it is sufficient to note that it existed.

The Beginnings of the Movement

But before the eleventh century ended forces were at work in Ireland which prepared the way for the introduction of a new order. They were set free by the conversion of the Norsemen to Christianity, and by their final defeat at the battle of Clontarf. The date of the conversion cannot be fixed: it was probably a gradual process. And we do not know from what source the Danes derived their Christianity. The victory of Clontarf was won on Good Friday, 1014.

Now a study of the Annals reveals the fact that in the seventh and eighth centuries there was a goodly, and on the whole an increasing, body of scholars in Ireland. Under the Norse domination, as we might expect, the number was greatly diminished. But already in the tenth century there was a notable increase: in the eleventh century the number

was doubled. In the tenth century, moreover, and still more in the eleventh, scholars began to congregate at special centres, which became permanent homes of learning, the most prominent of these schools being at Armagh and Clonmacnoise. And during the same period we find frequent mention of an official, unknown before the arrival of the Norsemen, who is styled *fer légind* or professor. Between 925 and 1000 the obits of twenty-three professors are recorded; in the eleventh century of more than fifty. In the greater number of cases the *fer légind* is associated with one of those seats of learning which is known to have been most prolific of scholars.

Thus it appears that gradually, as the onslaughts of the Danes became less frequent, Irish men of learning tended more and more to become teachers rather than mere students, and to gravitate towards a few great centres of study. The climax of this movement towards organization and the eminence of special places was reached about the middle of the eleventh century (1030-1063), when mention is made of thirty-three persons who held the office of *fer légind*, and when the principal schools seem to have been those of Clonmacnoise, Armagh, Kildare and Kells.

The Reformation of the twelfth century, like that of the sixteenth, was prepared for by a revival of learning.

But further, the defeat of the Danes removed the barrier which had hindered communication between Ireland and the rest of Europe. Students once more came to Ireland from other lands to pursue their studies. The most remarkable of these was perhaps Sulien, the future bishop of Saint David's. Sulien the Wise was born shortly before the date of the battle of Clontarf in the district of Cardigan. In early youth he displayed much aptitude for learning, and in middle life, about 1058, "stirred by the example of the fathers," he paid

a visit to the Irish schools in order to perfect his studies. He spent thirteen years in that country, and then established a famous school at Llanbadarn Fawr in Wales. In the library of Trinity College, Dublin, there is a precious relic of the work of this school. It is a beautiful manuscript of Saint Jerome's Latin version of the Psalter according to the Hebrew, once the property of Bishop Bedell. The manuscript was written by a member of the school, a Welshman named Ithael. It is adorned with excellent illuminations by John, one of Sulien's sons, and was presented to Ricemarch, another son of Sulien. A valuable copy of the Hieronymian Martyrology prefixed to it gives sundry indications that it was transcribed from an Irish exemplar. At the end of the volume are some verses composed by Ricemarch, and perhaps written there by his own hand. They display considerable Biblical and patristic learning. Another relic of the school is a copy of Saint Augustine's *De Trinitate* in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It was written and illuminated by John, and contains excellent Latin verses from his pen. In the British Museum there is also a poem of Ricemarch describing the horrors of the Norman invasion of Wales. And finally we have a *Life of Saint David*, by the same author. It relates many incidents culled from the lives of Irish saints who had in one way or another been brought into contact with David; all of them reminiscent of Sulien's studies in the Irish Schools.

I have dwelt on these things because they illustrate in a striking way the revival of Irish learning in the eleventh century. But just at the time when Sulien, and doubtless many other foreigners, were coming to Ireland to study, Irish scholars were beginning to renew their ancient habit of travelling to other countries. By way of example I may mention two, both of whom were known by the same name, Marianus Scotus. One of these, a native of the north of Ireland, whose real name was Muiredach Mac Robartaich, founded the monastery of Saint Peter at Ratisbon about

1070; and he was succeeded there by six abbots of north Irish birth. He wrote a commentary on the Pauline Epistles, which is still preserved in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The other, Mael Brigte by name, left Ireland in 1056, and after some wanderings established himself at Mainz in 1069. He compiled a chronicle, which is of considerable value. Hereafter I shall have to mention other Irish men of travel; and it will be seen that from some of them, who returned home, came the main impulse to the reform of the Irish Church.

The battle of Clontarf broke the power of the Danes in Ireland; but it did not secure their departure from the country. Those that remained were mainly settled in the four cities of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford and Limerick. In due time these four Danish colonies adopted the Christian Faith, and before long they became organized churches, each presided over by a bishop. In Dublin this took place a quarter of a century after the battle of Clontarf, the first bishop being Dunan, in whose episcopate the Danish king, Sitric, founded the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity about 1040. Of the early ecclesiastical history of Wexford practically nothing is known; but the first bishop of Waterford was consecrated in 1096, and the first bishop of Limerick eight or ten years later. These were the first churches in Ireland ruled by bishops who were not abbots; and it seems that each of the bishops had a defined diocese. The dioceses of Dublin, Waterford, and perhaps Wexford, were very small, extending only a little way, if at all, beyond the walls of the Cathedral city. The diocese of Limerick, on the other hand, was extensive; rather larger than the present diocese of the same name. But whether large or small each of these dioceses presented to the eyes of the Irish a model of Church government similar to that in vogue on the Continent, and utterly different from that to which they were accustomed.

This might prove a potent factor in the Reformation, once a tendency developed among the Irish to bring their ecclesiastical machinery into conformity with that of the rest of the world. But it is manifest that by itself it would not induce them to re-model their hierarchy. It was not to be expected that they would cast aside the tradition of centuries, moved merely by a desire to imitate their late enemies. If, as is commonly held, the Danish dioceses, without exception, held themselves aloof from, or were hostile to, Irish Christianity, such a result could hardly have been attained, at any rate until the coming of the Anglo-Normans. These later invaders would doubtless have forced diocesan episcopacy on the Irish Church. But that it was established in Ireland before the country came, even in part, under English rule, is certain. So we must ask the question: What was the connecting link which bound the Church of the Danish colonists to that of Celtic Ireland? By way of answer I point to the remarkable fact, often overlooked, that all the earliest bishops of the Danish dioceses were of Irish birth. Why Danish Christians should have elected Irishmen as their bishops I do not attempt to explain. But the evidence for the fact is clear.

The first two bishops of Dublin, Dunan and Patrick (Gilla Pátraic), had unmistakably Irish names. So too had their immediate successors Donough O'Hanley and his nephew Samuel O'Hanley; and of these two the latter is stated by the English chronicler Eadmer to have been "natione Hibernensis." The next bishop, Gregory - the first archbishop of Dublin - was likewise "natione Hibernensis" according to the continuator of Florence of Worcester. He was followed by Saint Laurence O'Toole, of whose nationality it is unnecessary to give proof.

Malchus, the earliest bishop of Waterford, was an Irishman; so also was Gilbert, the first bishop of Limerick. And when

Gilbert resigned his see, after an episcopate of thirty-five years, he was succeeded by Patrick, whose name tells its own tale.

Most of the Irish rulers of Danish dioceses whom I have mentioned were men of travel. Patrick of Dublin, to whose learning Lanfranc bears testimony, "was nourished in monastic institutions from his boyhood," and certainly not, in an Irish religious house. Donough O'Hanley, before his consecration, was a monk of Canterbury; Samuel O'Hanley was a monk of Saint Albans; Malchus was called to Waterford from Walkelin's monastery at Winchester; Gilbert of Limerick had visited Normandy, and at a later date we find him assisting at the consecration of a bishop in Westminster Abbey. Such men had had training which familiarized them with Roman methods of Church Government. They were well fitted to organize and rule their dioceses. And if they desired to imbue the Celtic Church with the principles which they had learnt, and on which they acted, their nationality gave them a ground of appeal which no Dane could have had. It is of course not to be assumed that all of them were so disposed. The Danish Christians of Dublin not only stood aside from the Celtic Church; for reasons which will appear later they were inimical to it, and it to them. Their bishops, with the possible exception of the first, made profession of canonical obedience to the English Primate. Not only so: they gloried in their subjection to Canterbury. "We have always been willing subjects of your predecessors," wrote the burgesses and clergy of Dublin to Ralph, archbishop of Canterbury, when the see was vacant in 1121. And then, after a reference to the great jealousy of Cellach of Armagh against them, they proceed to declare, "We will not obey his command, but desire to be always under your rule. Therefore we beseech you to promote Gregory to the episcopate if you wish to retain any longer the parish which we have kept for you so long." It was clearly impossible that this diocese

could directly influence the Irish in the direction of reform. But no such obstacle barred the path of the first bishops of Limerick and Waterford. Gilbert owed no allegiance to Canterbury; Malchus was consecrated at Canterbury, but he soon escaped his profession of obedience to Anselm. Both became leaders of the romanizing movement in Ireland.

But the influence of the Danish dioceses on the Irish Church was not limited to the personal action of their bishops. Indirectly all of them, including Dublin, had a share in promoting the Reformation. Archbishop Lanfranc, as early as 1072, claimed that his primacy included Ireland as well as England. The claim, curiously enough, was based on Bede's History, in which there is not a single word which supports it. But the arrival two years later of Patrick, elect of Dublin, seeking consecration at his hands, gave him his opportunity to enforce it. When Patrick returned to take possession of his see he carried with him two letters from Lanfranc. One was addressed to Gothric, the Manx prince who for the moment was king of Dublin. Lanfranc, with tactful exaggeration, dubs him "glorious king of Ireland," and tells him that in consecrating Patrick he had followed the custom of his predecessors in the chair of Saint Augustine. The other letter was more important. It was directed to Turlough O'Brien, grandson of Brian Boroimhe, who is also styled, inconsistently, and not altogether truly, "magnificent king of Ireland": he was doubtless king of Ireland in hope, but in fact he never extended his sway beyond the southern half of the island. Turlough's attention is called to the irregularities of the Irish Church. He is urged to call a council of bishops and religious men for the extirpation of those evil customs, and to be present at it in person. This letter evidently produced an impression, and not only on Turlough O'Brien. For a few years later Lanfranc wrote another letter, this time to a bishop named Donnell and others, who had sought his

advice on a difficult question concerning the sacrament of baptism.

Anselm followed in the footsteps of Lanfranc. Not long after his consecration (1093) he wrote to Donnell, Donough O'Hanley and the rest of the bishops of Ireland, begging the aid of their prayers, and urging them to consult him in all cases of difficulty. Almost immediately afterwards came the election of Malchus, bishop of Waterford, in 1096. Among those who signed the petition for his consecration were Bishop Donnell, Samuel O'Hanley, whom Anselm had consecrated for Dublin earlier in the same year, and O'Dunan, bishop of Meath (Idunan episcopus Midiae), whose name we shall do well to remember. But most notable of all were Murtough O'Brien, son of Turlough, then the strongest of Irish kings, soon to be *ardrí*, and his brother Dermot O'Brien. It is clear that Lanfranc had won the O'Briens to the Romanizing side; and Anselm was determined to hold them fast. Within the next few years there was a fairly regular correspondence between him and Murtough, of which some letters have been preserved. The relation between the two men was evidently most friendly. And the archbishop fully exploited his opportunity. Again and again he reminded the king of his duty to repress abuses, the most important of which in his eyes were lax sexual morality, and the consecration of bishops by single bishops, without fixed sees or defined dioceses.

So Lanfranc and Anselm schooled the O'Briens in the principles of Rome. And from one point of view their efforts were completely successful. The O'Briens became staunch friends of the Reform movement in Ireland. But from another point of view they failed. We must remember that their aim was not only to purify the Irish Church, but to bring it into subjection to Canterbury. That they did not succeed in doing. The Reformation, which they taught the O'Briens to

support, meant, in the end, a repudiation of the pretensions of the English primates.

I have mentioned among those who were concerned in the election of Malchus of Waterford, O'Dunan, bishop of Meath. He is unquestionably Máel Muire Ua Dunáin, whom the annalists describe as "learned bishop of the Goidhil, and head of the clergy of Ireland, and steward of the almsdeeds of the world," and who died on Christmas Eve, 1117, at the age of seventy-six. He is mentioned in a charter in the Book of Kells, the date of which is apparently about 1100, as Senior of Leath Chuinn (i.e. the north of Ireland). He was fifty-five when Malchus was elected, and had probably already attained the eminence throughout Ireland which is attested by the high-flown phrases of the Annals. That he was then bishop of Meath in the modern sense is impossible; the title at that period would mean no more than that he was a bishop who lived within the borders of the Kingdom of Meath. But the Annals of Tigernach tell us that he died at Clonard, from which it may perhaps be inferred that his see was at that place. His importance for us just now is that he is the only adherent of the Reform movement whom we have yet discovered in the north of Ireland.

The First Stage

Before proceeding further in our investigation of the origin and course of the Reformation, it may be well to recall how far we have already advanced. We started from the fact that a Reformation of the Irish Church was actually accomplished in the twelfth century, and we proceeded to look for the causes which may have brought it about. We have found that the first of these was the revival of learning consequent on the cessation of the ravages of the Norsemen. We have noted also the restoration at the same period of communication between Ireland and the rest of Europe - the

coming of students to the Irish schools, and the wanderings of Irish scholars in other lands. We have seen that the establishment of the Danish dioceses gave to the Irish a model of diocesan episcopacy, and that among the Irish-born bishops of those dioceses there were men capable of leading a Reform movement. And we have learned that Lanfranc and Anselm, through their relation with the Danish dioceses, found means to induce the more conspicuous civil and religious leaders of the Celtic population to undertake the work of reconstituting the Church. Finally, we have been able to name some persons who might be expected to take a prominent place in the early stages of the Reformation. They are Gilbert of Limerick, Malchus of Waterford, O'Dunan of Meath, and the princes of the O'Brien family. The best proof that we have rightly conceived the origin of the movement will come before us when we study the share which these persons severally had in promoting it.

We must now trace, as far as it can be done, the first steps in the process by which, under the influences which I have indicated, the Church of Ireland passed from its older to its later hierarchical system.

The earliest attempt to give concrete form to the principles of the Reformers seems to have been made in the Kingdom of Meath, about the year 1100. But the primary evidence for the fact is of much later date. There are extant some constitutions of Simon Rochfort, bishop of Meath, put forth at a synod of his diocese held at the monastery of SS. Peter and Paul at Newtown, near Trim, in 1216. The first of them recites an ordinance of the papal legate, Cardinal John Paparo, at the Council of Kells in 1152, which is of great importance.

Paparo ordered that as the bishops of the weaker sees died off, arch-priests, or, as we call them, rural deans, should

succeed to their place, and take charge of the clergy and people within their borders.

The inference which this enactment suggests is that the weaker sees to which it refers were the centres of small dioceses, which Paparo desired to be converted into rural deaneries. In accordance with the ordinance of Paparo, Rochfort's synod enjoined that rural deans should be placed in the five sees of Trim, Kells, Slane, Skreen and Dunshaughlin, each of whom should supervise the churches in his own deanery. These, with Clonard, which had long been the see of Rochfort's diocese, are six of the twelve rural deaneries into which the present diocese of Meath is divided. I conclude that they, and probably the remaining six, coincided more or less closely with dioceses ruled by bishops in the first half of the twelfth century.

Let us now call to our aid a much earlier witness. The annalists inform us that in the year 1111 there was an assembly at Usnagh in Meath. It decreed that "the parishes of Meath" should be equally divided between the bishops of Clonmacnoise and Clonard. We may infer that Clonmacnoise and Clonard, two of the present rural deaneries, were then dioceses. It is not likely that the dioceses of Meath would have been formed into two groups, each to constitute the diocese of a bishop who had already no diocese of his own. But however that may be, we have here proof that before 1111 Meath had been parted into a number of small dioceses ruled by bishops.

If the question be asked, By whose authority or influence this division of Meath into dioceses was made? I can suggest no one more likely than Máel Muire Ua Dunáin, the "bishop of Meath" to whom reference has already been made. He was a Meath man, and probably bishop of Clonard: he was an ecclesiastic of great repute, especially in the north; and he

was a devoted adherent of the Reform movement. His action, if indeed it was his, was premature and ill-advised. As we shall see, his work had to be slowly undone. But it is remarkable, as the first attempt known to us to establish diocesan episcopacy among the Irish. I shall have more to say about it hereafter; but now I must follow the main stream of events.

Gilbert, the first bishop of Limerick, as has already been noted, was an Irishman. Indeed, we may venture to describe him as one of the most remarkable Irishmen of his time, in spite of the fact that the Annals pass him by in almost complete silence. He was at any rate a staunch supporter, or, as we should rather say, the leader of the Reformation movement in its earliest course. In a letter written in 1107 Anselm exhorted him, in virtue of their mutual friendship, to make good use of his episcopal office by correcting that which was amiss, and planting and sowing good customs, calling to aid him in the work his king (Murtough O'Brien), the other Irish bishops, and all whom he could persuade. That, assuredly, Gilbert was forward to do.

No sooner had he taken possession of his see than he began to organize a diocese. Its boundaries seem to have been fixed with care. It was exactly co-extensive with the modern diocese of Limerick, except on the north, where it stretched across the Shannon and included part of the present diocese of Killaloe. Moreover he made the Church of Saint Mary his Cathedral Church; indeed it is not unlikely that he built it to serve that purpose.

A few years later he was appointed Legate of the Holy See. It is manifest that his new office gave him a unique opportunity of moulding the fortunes of the Irish Church. In Ireland Gilbert was now virtually the chief prelate and head of the Church. He was the representative and embodiment of

the authority of the Holy See. The whole Romanizing party would naturally circle round him as their leader, and many waverers would be attracted to the new movement in the Irish Church, by the claim which he could make to speak in the name of the head of the Church Catholic.

It was after he became legate, and no doubt in virtue of his legatine commission, that he issued a treatise which may be regarded as the programme of the Reformation. It is entitled *De Statu Ecclesiae*. Of this a fragment, including its earlier chapters, is still in our hands.

Before giving a slight summary of its contents I must mention that it is addressed "to the bishops and presbyters of the whole of Ireland," and that Gilbert declares that he wrote it at the urgent request of many of them. In this statement there may lurk an element of exaggeration. But behind it there lies at least so much truth as this. A considerable body of the clergy had approached the newly made legate, and requested his instruction regarding the proper constitution of the Church - for such is the subject of his tract; and that implies that the Romanizing movement was no longer in its infancy. There were many bishops and presbyters who had become dissatisfied with the old Irish method of Church government. They desired to bring it into conformity with that of the Roman Church. But they were in some uncertainty as to the nature of the changes that should be made, and so they asked Gilbert to give them authoritative counsel.

In reply to their petition, with the aid of an elaborate diagram, he sketched as follows the organization of a properly ordered Church.

The bishops, he tells us, and others of higher rank in the ministry belong to the general Church, as distinct from

particular churches. The priest is the highest officer in a particular church. It is the primary duty of every priest to serve and obey his bishop with all humility. For by the bishops particular churches are ruled. To each bishop are subject all the churches within his jurisdiction. And this applies as well to monastic establishments as to parishes. The head of each parish is a priest, the head of each monastery is an abbot, who is himself a priest. The bishop has a pontifical church, in which is his see (sedes), and of which he is the head. From it he governs the inferior churches. A bishop can perform all the offices of a priest, but he has seven functions peculiar to himself: to confirm, to bless, to absolve, to hold synods, to dedicate churches and altars, to consecrate the ornaments of churches, to ordain abbots and abbesses and the secular clergy. Gilbert's diagram represented the bishop as ruling two churches; but he explains that this is to be interpreted figuratively. A bishop may have as many as a thousand churches within his jurisdiction: he must have at least ten.

A bishop is himself subject to authority. His immediate superior is the archbishop. An archbishop has a sphere of immediate jurisdiction, like any other bishop, but he also rules a number of subject bishops. Of these there must be at least three; but an archbishop is not permitted to have more than twenty subject bishops - an important point, as we shall see. Above the archbishop is the primate. It is the special privilege of the primate to ordain and crown the king. He too has his sphere of immediate jurisdiction, and he must have at least one subject archbishop, but not more than six.

Primates and archbishops must be consecrated at Rome by the Pope, or at least must receive the pall from him. Without the pall they are not raised above their fellow-bishops.

Finally, the primates are subject to the Pope, and the Pope to Christ.

The higher members of the hierarchy have their analogues in the civil order. The Pope corresponds to the emperor, the primate to the king, an archbishop to a duke, a bishop to an earl, a priest to a knight. But all these are merely grades of the order of priests. There are but seven orders of the ministry - priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers and door-keepers. Of the laity Gilbert says little. They are of two classes; husbandmen and soldiers. Their duties are to attend church, to pay first-fruits, tithes and oblations, to avoid evil and do good, and to obey their pastors.

There is nothing original in all this; and some parts of it must have been very puzzling to stay-at-home Irishmen. For example, what were they to make of Gilbert's comparison of primates, archbishops, bishops and priests to kings, dukes, earls and knights? They knew as little of dukes and earls in the civil order as they did of primates and archbishops in the ecclesiastical; and they had far more kings than suited Gilbert's scheme. But the tract is important, both as a summary of the teaching which Gilbert had no doubt been inculcating far and wide for years, and as a permanent record, for future use, of the aims of the Reformers.

However unintelligible the treatise may have been in parts, it brought out with startling clearness one or two essential points. First the Church must be ruled by bishops. Even the monasteries are subject to them. How amazing such a statement must have sounded to men who had inherited the tradition, many centuries old, that the abbots of monasteries were the true ecclesiastical rulers, bishops their subordinate officials.

Moreover, bishoprics and dioceses could not be set up at random. The number of bishops and by consequence the size of dioceses must be carefully considered. The puny bishoprics of Meath, for example, could form no part of a scheme such as Gilbert adumbrated.

It was manifest that if his guidance were to be followed, no mere modification of existing arrangements would suffice. The old hierarchy must be torn up by the roots, and a new hierarchy planted in its place.

We shall meet Gilbert again in the course of our story. But we may now turn aside from him to make the acquaintance of a new actor in the drama of the Reformation. Like O'Dunan he was a Northern.

Cellach was born in 1080. He was an Armagh man, sprung from the family which for centuries past had provided abbots for the monastery of that city, the grandson of a former abbot. He first appears on the scene in 1105, when on the death of Abbot Donnell he became coarb of Patrick and abbot of Armagh. He was elected, we may assume, in the customary way. He was then under twenty-six years of age, and was apparently still a layman. But his subsequent action shows that he was already a convinced disciple of the new movement. Doubtless he had fallen under the spell of Gilbert of Limerick. Six weeks after his election he abandoned the tradition of a century and a half, and received holy orders. But in other respects he trod in the footsteps of his predecessors. In the following year he went on a circuit of the Cenél Eoghain, and "took away his full demand: namely, a cow for every six, or an in-calf heifer for every three, or a half ounce of silver for every four, besides many donations also." Next he proceeded to Munster, with similar results. But his circuit of Munster is important for other reasons. There he had opportunities of intercourse

with his Munster friends, Gilbert of Limerick and Malchus of Waterford. And with that circuit we may connect two incidents of the highest significance. In 1106, apparently in the latter part of the year, Caincomrac Ua Baigill, bishop of Armagh, died. The news of his death probably reached Cellach while he was in the south. Certainly in Munster Cellach was consecrated bishop. It is impossible not to connect the latter event with the former. He was consecrated to fill the vacancy created by the death of O'Boyle. Thus he was now bishop of Armagh as well as coarb of Patrick. In his own person he united the two lines of coarbial and episcopal succession, which had parted asunder in 957, when the first of a series of lay coarbs had been elected, and the first of the six contemporary bishops had been consecrated. This was a great gain for the Reformers. The old anomaly of a ruler of the Church who was not a bishop had, so far as Armagh was concerned, disappeared for the time. And Armagh was the principal ecclesiastical centre in Ireland. Cellach might now call himself archbishop of Armagh, though he had not fulfilled the condition laid down by Gilbert, that an archbishop must receive the pall at the hands of the Pope. The title was actually accorded to him by so rigid a papalist as Saint Bernard.

But there was more to come. In the year 1101 there had been held at Cashel a great assembly of the clergy and people of Ireland. Bishop O'Dunan, whom we already know, was at their head. To it came also Murtough O'Brien, who earlier in the year, after an expedition in force through Connaught and Ulster, had entered Tara as ardrí of Ireland. In the presence of the assembly he surrendered Cashel, the royal city of the kings of Munster, to the Church, as an offering to God and Saint Patrick. When we consider the persons who were concerned in this transaction we find good ground for the suspicion that the gift was intended in

some way to benefit the movement for reform. Now Saint Bernard informs us that Cellach created a second archiepiscopal see in Ireland in subordination to Armagh. After his manner he does not tell us where it was situated. It is certain, however, that it was at Cashel, which was the seat of an archbishop in 1110. It was probably surrendered for this very purpose by O'Brien. And if it be asked when Cellach erected it into an archbishopric the answer is scarcely doubtful. Only once, so far as we know, did Cellach enter Munster before 1110. It was on the occasion of his circuit. In the year of the circuit, therefore, 1106, the archbishopric of Cashel was founded. In that same year, or shortly afterwards, Malchus of Waterford was translated to the new see, and became its first archbishop. There is no evidence that a new bishop was consecrated for Waterford in succession to Malchus: this indeed is unlikely. But it should be noted that by his acceptance of an archbishopric subject to Armagh, Malchus was released from the profession of obedience which he had made to Anselm ten years earlier. He was now a bishop of the Church of Ireland, with undivided allegiance.

The reason for the creation of a second archbishopric is not difficult to guess. By this time the plans of the Reformers must have been in some degree matured: before long, as we shall see, they were set forth in minute detail. Already Cellach was archbishop of Armagh. His suffragan sees, indeed, apart from those formed by O'Dunan, if their bishops acknowledged themselves as his suffragans, were in nubibus. But suffragan sees he must have, according to the theory of Gilbert, each with a diocese attached to it. They must be at least three in number, but not more than twenty. Now it was a foregone conclusion that if the Reformers had their way there would be more than twenty dioceses in Ireland. Hence, by Gilbert's rule, there must be a second archbishop. Moreover, by making the archbishopric of

Cashel subject to Armagh, Cellach secured for himself and his successors a title yet more imposing than that of archbishop. He was now Primate of Ireland; for it sufficed, if Gilbert spoke truly, that a primate should have one subject archbishop. As coarb of Patrick Cellach's authority ranged over the whole country; as primate his sway would be no less extensive. He actually claimed the title, if not then, at least a few years later.

We may now for a while leave Gilbert and Cellach and Malchus and O'Dunan. With Gilbert as legate, and Cellach and Malchus as archbishops; with dioceses already formed at Limerick and Waterford and in Meath, probably also at Armagh and Cashel and Wexford; with the great extension of the movement, and its spread from Munster to Meath and Ulster, all was ready for the meeting of the Synod whose ordinances should give definite shape to the policy to be pursued in the future.

The Synod of Rathbreasail

Geoffrey Keating quotes from the lost Annals of Clonenagh an account of a national Synod or Council held at Rathbreasail in the year 1110. The existing Annals record that a national Council met at Fiadh meic Oengusa in 1111. With the exception of the Annals of Inisfallen, none of them mention Rathbreasail; but the Inisfallen annalist tells us that it is another name for Fiadh meic Oengusa. I shall assume therefore that there were not two national Synods in successive years, but one; and, following the Annals of Clonenagh, I shall call it the Synod of Rathbreasail, and date it in 1110.

The Synod of Rathbreasail marks the beginning of the second stage of the Reformation movement. It was convened by the papal legate; its purpose was the

Romanizing of the Irish Church, and, in particular, the establishment in it of diocesan episcopacy. Fortunately Keating's excerpts from its Acts give us ample information concerning the canons which dealt with this matter.

The annalists, as I have said, describe the council as a national assembly. But we can hardly claim so much for it. It is much more probable that it was in reality a meeting of the Reforming party. The first signature appended to its canons was that of Gilbert, who presided as legate of the Holy See. He was followed by Cellach, "coarb of Patrick and Primate of Ireland," and Malchus, "archbishop of Cashel," whom we have known as bishop of Waterford. The signatures of many bishops followed, but they have not been preserved. We know, however, that Bishop O'Dunan was present, as was also Murtough O'Brien, king of Ireland. These were all leaders of the Reforming party; and it is evident that they guided the deliberations of the Council. Moreover there were no representatives of the provinces of Connaught and Leinster, in which as yet, it appears, the Reform movement had not established itself. That is made clear by notes appended to canons which specially concerned those provinces. One of them begins thus: "If the Connaught clergy agree to this ... we desire it, and if they do not" - in that case they may do as they please, with certain limitations. The clergy of Leinster are accorded a similar liberty. It is obvious that if among the members of the Council there had been men who could speak with authority for the provinces mentioned such notes need not, and therefore could not, have been written. The Council represented Munster, Ulster and Meath. It was national, not because it could speak for all Ireland, but because it made laws for all Ireland.

I must now give an account of those laws, so far as they relate to the organization of the Church. I follow the Annals

of Clonenagh, as reported by Keating: but in two or three places I have been obliged to amend his text.

The fathers began by appealing to English precedent. "Just as twelve bishops were fixed under Canterbury in the south of England, and twelve bishops in the north under the city of York," so it was ordained that there should be twelve bishops in the south of Ireland, and twelve in the north. The constitution of the Irish Church was henceforth, it would seem, to be a copy of that of the English Church. But, as it happens, neither in 1110 nor in any other year of its history, had the Church of England twelve sees under Canterbury and twelve under York. How then can we explain the statement of the Synod? The answer is simple. Bede preserves a letter of Pope Gregory the Great, written in 601, in which Saint Augustine of Canterbury was directed to consecrate twelve bishops as his own suffragans. He was also ordered to consecrate a bishop for York, who, if his mission proved successful, was likewise to consecrate twelve suffragans, and to be promoted to the dignity of a metropolitan. It is clear that the Synod found its precedent in this letter, not observing that Pope Gregory's ordinance was never carried into effect. But they made another mistake. For Gregory intended that there should be twelve bishops in the north of England, and twelve in the south, exclusive of the archbishops, twenty-six in all; while it is evident that the Council of Rathbreasail intended that there should be twelve bishops in the north of Ireland, and twelve in the south, including the archbishops, twenty-four in all. Some one whose lead the Synod followed - probably the papal legate - had read his Bede with little care. But that is not surprising. Lanfranc had misread Bede, when on his authority he claimed to be Primate of Ireland; why should not Gilbert have gone astray in like fashion? The point to be noticed and emphasized is that the first act of the Synod was to fix the number of the Irish sees, on the curious

principle that what the wisdom of Pope Gregory held to be good for England would suit Ireland also.

Apparently the next step in the procedure was to determine the distribution of the dioceses among the provinces, and to fix the see of each prospective diocese. Ireland was divided into two portions by a line running, approximately, from Dublin to Galway. The part to the north of that line was known as Leath Chuinn, the part to the south as Leath Mogha. In Leath Chuinn were the provinces of Ulster and Connaught and the kingdom of Meath; in Leath Mogha were the provinces of Munster and Leinster. The Synod decreed that there should be five sees in Ulster, five in Connaught, and two in Meath, making twelve bishoprics for Leath Chuinn; there were to be seven in Munster and five in Leinster - twelve bishoprics for Leath Mogha. The names of all these sees were given in the Acts of the Synod.

Finally the Synod defined the boundaries of the dioceses to which the sees severally belonged. It is not my purpose to give a minute description of these boundaries. That would involve an excursus on Irish topography, which would be, to say the least, out of place. It will suffice to indicate roughly those of the five dioceses of Ulster. To the west was what was called the "parish" (fairche) of Derry or Raphoe. It was nearly identical with our diocese of Raphoe. The only important difference is that it included Inishowen, the district between Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle, which now belongs to the diocese of Derry. Next to the parish of Derry or Raphoe the Synod placed the parish of Ardstraw. Ardstraw never became the see, and the diocese was subsequently known as "of Derry." It extended eastward to the Carntougher Mountains, and coincides pretty closely with the present diocese. It subsequently gained Inishowen from its western neighbour, and the strip between the Carntougher Mountains and the Bann from its eastern neighbour. But otherwise it remains

much as the Synod of Rathbreasail determined. Next to it was to be the parish of Connor or Down. When the portion of it to the west of the Bann was transferred to Derry, it coincided almost exactly with the modern Down, Connor and Dromore. On the other hand the parish of Armagh seems originally to have included the modern county of Monaghan: it has shrunk to little more than half its size. The parish of Clogher, at first very small, has extended east and west, and is three times as large as it was intended to be. On the whole the work of the Synod has stood well the test of many centuries of history.

It is indeed wonderful that it should have done so. For the method of the Synod - fixing the number of the dioceses before their boundaries were discussed - was unstatesmanlike. Always, and necessarily, ecclesiastical divisions have coincided with civil divisions. We may find the germ of the rule in the Acts of the Apostles. If this was inevitable in other lands it was even more inevitable in Ireland in pre-Norman days. The Irish people was a collection of clans, having, it is true, certain common institutions, but bound together by no sort of national constitution, and often at war with each other. If ecclesiastical divisions were to be permanent in Ireland, they must take account of the tribal divisions of the country. The primary ecclesiastical unit must be the territory of a tribe, just as it was the primary civil unit. But to base the limits of dioceses, consistently and in every case, on tribal boundaries was impossible when the number of dioceses was arbitrarily fixed beforehand. It could not be that exactly the same number of dioceses would suit Ulster as suited Leinster and Connaught. In one province the tribes would be more or less numerous, and more or less mutually antagonistic, than in another. By reason of its method, therefore, the Synod was doomed to fall short of complete success in its work.

We have instances in Ulster of the soundness of the principle that I have stated. Take the diocese of Raphoe. It was designed to include Inishowen. But from a tribal point of view Inishowen (Inis Eoghain) belonged to the next diocese, which included the tribeland of Tír Eoghain. Its inhabitants were of the same stock as the Cenél Eoghain, and were known as the Cenél Eoghain of the Island. So the natural result followed. Inishowen broke off from the diocese of Raphoe and became part of the diocese of Derry. When this happened the diocese of Raphoe was stabilized. It consisted of the land of a single tribe, the Cenél Conaill; and so henceforth its limits were never altered.

We can easily understand, therefore, that the disregard of tribal boundaries, forced on it in many cases by its method, was an element of weakness in the Rathbreasail scheme. And yet it was natural that special stress should be laid on the arbitrary limitation of sees which was its main cause. Ireland was overrun with bishops. It is said that over fifty of them attended the Synod of Rathbreasail; and they represented only part of the country. But Gilbert had laid down the rule that an archbishop could not have more than twenty suffragans. On this principle, if all the existing bishops had been provided with dioceses, or all the larger tribes had been given bishops, Ireland would have had not two, but six or seven archbishops: and this would have been a travesty of Catholic Church order, as it was then understood. It was essential that the number should be ruthlessly cut down.

But the legislators of Rathbreasail did not entirely ignore tribal boundaries. On the contrary, so far as the numerical basis of their scheme permitted, they took them into account. And here we find that the Synod was confronted with another difficulty. The territories of tribes were fluctuating quantities. Hence, even if a diocese was the

district of a single tribe, with very definite boundaries, no one could be sure that in the course of years its limits would not change. Again I take an example from Ulster. The Synod selected the Carntougher Mountains as the boundary between the dioceses of Derry and Connor. And wisely. For between those mountains and the Bann there dwelt a sept - the Fir Li - whose affinities were altogether with the people to the east of the river. But only a few years after the Synod that territory was overrun by the O'Kanes of the Roe Valley, and the Fir Li retreated across the Bann, never to return. The result followed which might have been expected. Their territory was transferred from Connor to Derry, and the Bann to this day is the boundary of the two dioceses.

It may be well, before I pass to another subject, to call attention to some special features of the Rathbreasail canons.

First, let us note the prominence which is given to Limerick, the diocese of Gilbert, the president of the Synod. Usually a diocese is somewhat vaguely defined by four places on its borders. But here no less than thirteen are named. So full are the indications that a fairly exact map of the diocese could be drawn. Further, in this diocese alone mention is made of a Cathedral Church: "The Church of Mary in Limerick is its principal church." Note the present tense: "The Church of Mary is" - not shall be - "its principal church." We remember that Gilbert insisted in the *De Statu Ecclesiae* that a diocese should have a "pontifical church." Again, the boundaries of this one diocese are protected by a clause which has no parallel elsewhere: "Whosoever shall go against these boundaries goes against the Lord, and against Peter the Apostle, and Saint Patrick and his coarb and the Christian Church." Who but the legate of the Pope would have thus invoked Saint Peter?

Surely this portion of the ordinances of the Synod must have been penned by Gilbert himself. And the whole passage - by the minuteness of its description of the diocese, by the strength of the terms in which it is expressed, by the reference to the Cathedral Church as already existing - suggests that the diocese was formed and organized before the Synod met, as I have already assumed. We may even suspect that an attempt had been made to invade it, which Gilbert stoutly resisted, relying on his legatine authority.

In the list of dioceses there is an omission which demands explanation. No mention whatever is made of Dublin, the oldest diocese in Ireland. Not only so; the northern limit of the diocese of Glendalough is marked by Lambay Island and Greenogue, which lies due west of it in the County Meath. Thus the diocese of Glendalough, as contemplated by the Synod - and, it may be added, as it was in fact forty years later - included the whole of the actually existing diocese of Dublin. The Danish Christians of Dublin and their Irish bishop are treated as interlopers; they are absolutely ignored. It may be said that this was due to the mutual hostility which divided the diocese of Dublin from the native Church, and to the fact that the bishops of Dublin had always been subject to Canterbury. But it is not enough to say this; for the estrangement of Dublin from the Irish is the very thing that has to be accounted for.

It had its root in the growing prosperity of the Danish city. The Irish had no towns. Town life was introduced among them by the Norsemen. And of their towns Dublin was always the chief. By this time it had become so important that it had good right to be called the metropolis of the country. And its citizens were thoroughly aware of this. As early as 1074 the burgesses of Dublin and their bishop, Patrick, claimed for it that title. Now in all reason a metropolis should have a metropolitan as its bishop; and no

doubt the bishops of Dublin thought themselves de facto, if not de jure, superior to the other bishops of Ireland. In fact we find one of them playing the archbishop. We have two interesting letters of Anselm, written apparently about 1100. One of them is addressed to Malchus, bishop of Waterford, directing him to rebuke Samuel O'Hanley, bishop of Dublin, for various irregularities, in particular for having his cross carried before him like an archbishop; the other is addressed to Samuel himself, and complains of the same actions. These proceedings are not likely to have been brought to an end by Anselm's letters; and we may assume that they were continued as long as Samuel held the see of Dublin. It was but natural that Cellach should strongly resent them, for they were disrespectful both to himself and to the archbishop of Cashel. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that on the death of Samuel in 1121, eleven years after Rathbreasail, Cellach tried to get possession of the Church of Dublin, most probably with the intention of bringing it under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Glendalough. Nor are we surprised that the men of Dublin at once replied by electing another bishop and bidding Ralph of Canterbury to consecrate him if he desired to retain the suffragan see which they had so long preserved for him. We shall see hereafter how the bishops of Dublin were at length induced to look with favour on the Irish Church. Meanwhile we learn that they were not very obedient suffragans of Canterbury; and we cease to wonder that they were ignored in the Rathbreasail decrees.

Another feature of the canons of the Synod is worth noting. In several instances the see of a diocese was not absolutely fixed. Two places were named, and it was apparently left to the bishop of the future to select that one of the two which he preferred to be his city. Thus we have a diocese of Derry or Raphoe, a diocese of Connor or Down, another of Wexford or Ferns, and so forth. The meaning of this is best seen by

taking a single example. To one of the dioceses of Munster was assigned the area now occupied by the two dioceses of Waterford and Lismore. It consisted of the original Danish diocese of Waterford, together with a much more extensive non-Danish area. Alternative sees were named; it was described as the parish of Lismore or Waterford. Now Lismore was the most sacred spot in the enlarged diocese. It was the site of a monastery founded by Saint Mochuta. It was an ideal place for a bishop's see. But it was doubtless ruled at the moment by an abbot, the coarb of Mochuta. Unless he was prevailed on to accept episcopal orders, or was deprived of his authority, a diocesan bishop could not be established there. On the other hand, Waterford had no sacred traditions; but it was already the see of a diocese. In default of Lismore it would be a convenient place for the see. Between Lismore and Waterford the circumstances of the future must decide. Ultimately, it appears, Malchus retired from the archbishopric of Cashel, and became bishop of his older diocese, now so much greater than it had been. He placed his stool, however, not at Waterford but at Lismore. A similar, but not always identical course was followed in other such cases.

What the Synod of Rathbreasail actually accomplished was this. It gave to Ireland a paper constitution of the approved Roman and Catholic type. But by doing this it had not achieved the purpose of its existence. In the years that followed, its enactments had to be carried into effect. And here was the real crux. Before the Church came to be ruled by diocesan bishops, the existing rulers - the coarbs of church founders - must be dispossessed of their authority; the numerous bishops of the old Irish type must be got rid of; the jurisdiction of the new bishops must be fixed by common consent, or enforced without it; and revenues must be provided for them. A mere synodal decree could not accomplish all this. The diocesan system could become a

fact throughout the whole Church, and the last vestiges of the ancient constitution be made to disappear, only after determined effort, and probably bitter contention. And when all was done it would certainly be found that the scheme of dioceses arranged at Rathbreasail had been largely departed from.

I can best illustrate the nature of the difficulties which had to be encountered, and the length of time which might be required to overcome them, by giving a short outline of the history of the forming of the dioceses of the kingdom of Meath.

In Meath, as we have seen, there were dioceses ruled by bishops before Rathbreasail. But these dioceses were of small size. It may be doubted whether most of them fulfilled the condition laid down by Gilbert, that a bishop should have not less than ten churches within his jurisdiction. They had therefore to be grouped under a smaller number of prelates. What had to be accomplished in this case was not so much the clipping of the wings of the abbots, as the extirpation of the more recently appointed diocesan bishops. The Synod determined that the kingdom should be divided into two dioceses, one in the west, the other in the east. The western see was to be at Clonard, at the moment, as it seems, the see of O'Dunan, and famed as the site of the great monastery of Saint Finnian, founded in the sixth century; the eastern see was to be at Duleek, near Drogheda. Now a few months after the Synod of Rathbreasail there was held at Usnagh a local synod of the men of Meath, at which the king and many notable persons were present. This synod ordained that the parishes of Meath should be equally divided between the bishops of Clonmacnoise and Clonard. It will be observed that the principle of the Rathbreasail decree was accepted, that there should be two, and only two, dioceses in Meath. But the change made in

the sees is significant. The Synod of Rathbreasail intended that Clonard should be the see of the western diocese, which would include Clonmacnoise. The Synod of Usnagh demanded that Clonmacnoise, founded by one of the most noted of Irish saints, Saint Ciaran, should be one of the surviving sees, and that Clonard should be the see, not of the western, but of the eastern half of the kingdom. Thus the Synod of Rathbreasail was at once met with strenuous and, as it proved, successful opposition in Meath.

And here I may mention another fact. A few years after the Synod we have proof of the existence of a diocese in the north of the kingdom, which has not hitherto been mentioned, and which is not named in the Rathbreasail canons. We know it as the diocese of Kilmore. It may have been one of O'Dunan's dioceses, or it may have been founded later. One thing is certain. The diocese formed the territory of a strong tribe. Consequently it had in it the element of stability. It was never suppressed: it exists to this day. So far as it was concerned the canons of Rathbreasail were a dead letter from the beginning.

But let us return to Clonard. It was the business of its successive bishops, in accordance with the decrees of Usnagh, to annex the small neighbouring bishoprics of east Meath. They had considerable success. We possess a list of churches granted by Eugenius, the last Irish bishop of Clonard, to the monastery of Saint Thomas the Martyr, Dublin. They are scattered over the three deaneries of Dunshaughlin, Skreen and Trim. Thus Eugenius had absorbed into his diocese the bishoprics of those three places. Another document tells us that this same Eugenius consecrated the church of Duleek; which implies that the diocese of Duleek was also suppressed. Thus by 1191, the year of Eugenius's death - within eighty years of the Synod of Rathbreasail, and before the Anglo-Normans had captured

the ecclesiastical domination of Meath - the diocese of Clonard had expanded to four times its original size. Its bishop ruled the whole area of the modern county of Meath which lies south of the Boyne and Blackwater.

Simon Rochfort, the first English bishop, stretched his arm further. We have a charter of his, which may be dated before 1202, confirming to Saint Thomas's Abbey a number of churches in his diocese. It includes most, if not all, of the churches granted by his predecessor, but adds others. Among these are some in the deanery of Slane. The bishopric of Slane had been absorbed.

The rapid extension of his diocese towards the north suggested to Rochfort the desirability of having for his headquarters a more central place than Clonard. So in 1202 he translated the see to Newtown, near Trim, and began to call himself Bishop of Meath. Ten years later, as we know, this "impudent bishop" captured the diocese of Kells. The bishop of Meath (no longer of Clonard) from his see at Newtown had the oversight of nearly the whole of the modern county. Within the confines of his diocese were the seven older dioceses of Clonard, Dunshaughlin, Skreen, Trim, Duleek, Slane and Kells. This was probably the whole of the eastern diocese as designed by the Synod of Usnagh.

But the policy of annexation still went forward apace. Another document enables us to measure the progress of half a century. It is a concordat concerning metropolitanical visitations, between the archbishop of Armagh and Rochfort's third successor, Hugh de Tachmon. It is dated 9th April, 1265. The tenor of the concordat does not concern us: it is important for our purpose because it proves that in 1265 there were eleven rural deaneries in the diocese of Meath. Four more petty dioceses had been suppressed, Mullingar, Loxewdy, Ardnurcher and Fore. The diocese was

co-extensive with that of the present day, except that the diocese of Clonmacnoise - as small in 1265 as it had been in 1100 - was not yet brought in.

Clonmacnoise preserved its independence three centuries longer. It was incorporated with Meath in 1569. Thus at length the dream of the fathers of Rathbreasail was fulfilled. There were two dioceses in the ancient kingdom of Meath - Meath and Kilmore. But neither Duleek nor Clonard nor Clonmacnoise was a see. From that day to this, in fact, the diocese of Meath has had no see. And the boundary which parts Meath from Kilmore is very different from the line which the fathers of Rathbreasail drew between the dioceses of Clonard and Duleek, or that which the assembly of Usnagh drew between Clonmacnoise and Clonard.

Saint Malachy's Part in The Reformation

It is not possible, within the limits of this Introduction, to follow the later stages of the Reformation movement in detail. In the present section I confine myself to the part which Saint Malachy played in its development.

Malachy was born at Armagh in 1095. He was therefore a mere boy when the Synod of Rathbreasail met. At the dawn of his manhood he became the disciple of the recluse Imar O'Hagan. Imar was in sympathy with the aims of the reformers, and it was probably through his influence that Malachy became imbued with their principles. He soon attracted the notice of Cellach, and was by him ordained deacon. He was advanced to the priesthood about 1119. Shortly afterwards Cellach made the young priest his vicar. For the next year or two it was Malachy's duty to administer the diocese of Armagh; and he did so in the most effective - indeed revolutionary - fashion. He evidently let no man despise his youth. His purpose, as his biographer tells us,

was "to root out barbarous rites, to plant the rites of the Church." "He established in all the churches the apostolic sanctions and the decrees of the holy fathers, and especially the customs of the Holy Roman Church." He introduced the Roman method of chanting the services of the canonical hours. "He instituted anew Confession, Confirmation, the Marriage contract, of all of which those over whom he was placed were either ignorant or negligent." In a word, Malachy showed himself an ardent reformer.

One wonders how, even with the assistance of Cellach and Imar, a young man who had never left Armagh could have already become sufficiently acquainted with the usages of other churches to carry out these sweeping measures. Perhaps his zeal was not always according to knowledge. But he soon became aware of his limitations, and determined to seek instruction. With the consent of Cellach and Imar he betook himself to Malchus, who had by this time retired from the archbishopric of Cashel and was settled at Lismore. There Malachy spent three years. During that period he doubtless increased his knowledge of Roman customs and principles. But he did more. Cormac MacCarthy, son of the king of Desmond, was then a refugee in the monastery of Malchus. Between Cormac and Malachy there grew up a friendship, which proved in later years of much advantage to the reforming cause.

But at length Malachy's presence was urgently needed in the north, and he was recalled by Cellach and Imar. What had happened was this. The coarb of Saint Comgall at Bangor, the principal religious site in the north-east of Ireland, had lately died. Since he ended his days at Lismore, it may be assumed that he was a friend of Malchus, and of the movement with which he was identified. At any rate his successor, who was Malachy's uncle, expressed his willingness to surrender his office and the site of the

monastery to his nephew. Here was an opportunity to carry into effect one of the canons of Rathbreasail, which had hitherto been a dead letter, by establishing the diocese of Connor. Cellach, duly elected coarb of Patrick, and consecrated bishop, had no doubt been able to organize the diocese of Armagh in accordance with the Rathbreasail scheme. In like manner such a man as Malachy, enjoying the prestige which belonged to the coarb of Comgall, if consecrated bishop, would probably succeed in organizing the diocese of Connor. So in 1124 Malachy journeyed to Bangor, was installed as abbot, and was made bishop by Cellach. He administered his diocese with the same vigour which had already characterized his work at Armagh. But it is interesting to observe how closely he conformed to the old Irish type of bishop, in spite of his Roman proclivities. At heart he was far less bishop of Connor than coarb of Comgall, abbot of Bangor. Indeed, in strictness, he had no right to the title "bishop of Connor"; for Connor was not his see. He made Bangor his headquarters. Doubtless Malachy preferred Bangor to the nominal see, because it was consecrated by centuries of sacred memories, and because as yet he could not place the office of bishop above that of abbot. He ruled his great newly formed diocese, or as much of it as he succeeded in ruling, from its remotest corner on the sea shore, as Aidan ruled Northumbria from Holy Island. There he lived among his brethren, of whom he gathered a great company. There was no provision for his mensa, for he was "a lover of poverty." He practised austere asceticism. Yet he was an active missionary. He travelled incessantly through the diocese, but always on foot, visiting the towns, and roaming about the country parts, surrounded by his disciples. He preached to the people whom he met on his way. Nothing could be more unlike a medieval bishop of the ordinary kind. At every point we are reminded of the labours of Aidan and Ceadd and Cedd as they are described by Bede. But we may be sure that it was precisely because

Malachy was coarb of Bangor, because he lived according to the ancient Irish ideal of sainthood, that he secured the obedience of the people of his diocese.

In such work as I have mentioned Malachy was engaged from 1124 to 1127. In the latter year he was driven out of Bangor by Conor O'Loughlin, king of the north of Ireland, and a second time betook himself to Lismore. There he again met Cormac MacCarthy, for that unfortunate prince was once more taking sanctuary with Malchus. He had succeeded a little while before to the throne of Desmond, but had been driven out by Turlough O'Conor, who made his brother king in his stead. But after a few months, persuaded by the entreaties of Malchus and Malachy, and aided by the arms of Conor O'Brien, king of Thomond, a nephew of Murtough, Anselm's correspondent, he made a successful attempt to regain his kingdom. Then Malachy moved on to Iveragh in the County Kerry, and there, under Cormac's patronage, he founded a new monastery for his community. Once again Cormac has friendly intercourse with Malachy, and another O'Brien is on good terms with the reformers.

It was at Iveragh, two years later, that Malachy received news of the death of Archbishop Cellach. It was an announcement which must have caused great anxiety to him and his friends. Who was to succeed to the primacy?

The importance of the question will become manifest if we recall the progress which had already been made at Armagh, and what still remained to be done. When Cellach was elected abbot in 1105, and in the following year was consecrated bishop, a great point had been gained. For the first time for 150 years the church of Armagh had a bishop as its ruler. We may suppose that Cellach soon organized the diocese, the limits of which were fixed at Rathbreasail. But whatever Gilbert or Malchus might hold as to the source of

his authority, we cannot imagine that the members of the Church in the diocese based their allegiance to him on any other ground than the fact that he was their abbot and the coarb of Patrick. That he was a bishop added nothing, in their view, to his claims. Moreover Cellach belonged to the family which had long supplied Armagh with abbots. The abuse of hereditary succession had not disappeared with his appointment. If his successor was chosen in the time-honoured way, a member of the coarbial family would certainly be selected, and in all probability he would be a layman, who would not accept episcopal orders. In a word, all that had been achieved by the reformers at the most important ecclesiastical centre in Ireland would be undone.

Cellach had foreseen this, and accordingly he determined to nominate Malachy as his successor. "With the authority of Patrick" he laid upon the nobles, and especially upon "the two kings of Munster," the obligation of securing that his wish should be carried into effect. The two kings who were thus charged with a difficult duty were Conor O'Brien, king of Thomond, the principal representative of the O'Briens, and Cormac MacCarthy, king of Desmond, Malachy's friend.

From Cellach's point of view the choice of a successor which he had made was a wise one. Malachy was as zealous a reformer as himself. He was a man of unusual ability and force of character. Besides, he was possessed of a personal charm which might in time disarm opposition. He was already a bishop; therefore, if he were once seated in the chair of Patrick, the question whether the new coarb should be consecrated would not arise. More important still, he was not of the coarbial stock; with his entry into the see the scandal of hereditary succession would come to an end.

But it was not to be expected that the appointment would be accepted without strong protest; and at the moment

there seemed little prospect that the scheme of Cellach would attain fruition. There is no need to enter into the details of the fierce struggle that ensued. It is dealt with elsewhere. Suffice it to say that by 1137, with the aid of O'Brien and MacCarthy, and apparently with assistance also from Donough O'Carroll, king of Oriel, he was undisputed coarb of Patrick and archbishop of Armagh. The victory was won, and an immense stride had been made in the Reformation movement.

But Malachy had no mind to spend the rest of his life at Armagh. Five years before, as the condition of his entry into the fray, he had stipulated that as soon as he had been accepted as archbishop he should resign the see and return to his beloved Bangor. So in 1137 he nominated and consecrated Gelasius as his successor in the primacy, and "returned to his former parish, but not to Connor." Let me explain this enigmatical statement. Malachy had had some years' experience of the people of the diocese of Connor, whom Saint Bernard gently describes as "not men but beasts." He had doubtless discovered that the district which it included could not be ruled by a single bishop. In fact it consisted of two tribal territories, Dál Araide in the north, and Ulaid in the south; and the two tribes which inhabited them were usually engaged in mutual war. He decided that it should be divided into two dioceses. He consecrated a bishop for Dál Araide, with his see at Connor, and himself resumed the oversight of Ulaid, with his see at Bangor. Thus originated the present dioceses of Down and Connor. In Malachy's time the boundary between them seems to have run west from Larne. In the course of centuries it has shifted further south.

This division was a direct violation of the letter of the ordinance of Rathbreasail; but it did not contravene its spirit. In the letter, which ignored the civil divisions of the

country, the ordinance could not be obeyed. Malachy adopted a scheme which secured the permanent rule of diocesan bishops in the district.

Malachy was now, and continued to be till his death, bishop of Down, or more strictly of Bangor; in the current Irish phrase bishop of Ulaid. But his activities already extended beyond his diocese. Within the next two years he succeeded in establishing in actual fact another diocese which till now had existed only on paper. It was that which the Synod of Rathbreasail had called the diocese of Clogher, and which we know by the same name; but which for sixty years or more bore the name of the diocese of Oriel.

That we may understand his action let us return for a moment to the five Ulster dioceses as planned at Rathbreasail. In four of them regard was paid to tribal boundaries. The diocese of Raphoe corresponded to Tír Conaill, Derry to Tír Eoghain, Armagh to Oriel, while Connor comprehended the two territories of Dál Araide and Ulaid. The diocese of Clogher was of necessity the remainder of the province. If it coincided with a tribal district, that could only happen by chance. In fact it did not. It was much smaller than the other dioceses. It embraced only the present barony of Clogher in the county of Tyrone, and the portion of Fermanagh lying between it and the Erne waterway. It had within it no element of cohesion. It was most unlikely that it could ever constitute an ecclesiastical unit, governed by a bishop.

Nevertheless an attempt seems to have been made to consolidate it as a diocese a few years after Rathbreasail; as might have been expected, without success. A bishop of Clogher, who apparently had no diocese, died in 1135. He was succeeded by Christian O'Morgair, brother of Malachy. He was probably nominated and consecrated by his brother,

who was then titular archbishop of Armagh. Now about this time Donough O'Carroll, king of Oriel, joined the ranks of the reformers, as we may suppose under the influence of Malachy. His kingdom included the little diocese of Clogher; but the main part of it consisted of the present counties of Monaghan and Louth. Accordingly a bold stroke of policy was conceived and carried out. The diocese of Clogher was enlarged so as to cover the greater part of O'Carroll's kingdom. For this purpose the archbishop of Armagh surrendered a large part of his diocese - the whole of Monaghan and Louth. Then Christian moved his see from Clogher to the spot now occupied by the village of Louth. Thus there was constituted a new diocese, which included the Rathbreasail diocese of Clogher, but was four times its size, and had its see at Louth. It was known as the diocese of Oriel. In all this we see plainly the hand of Malachy. Not long after the removal of the see Christian died, and Malachy selected and consecrated his successor, one Edan O'Kelly. O'Kelly had a long episcopate, from 1139 to 1182; and with the help of O'Carroll he organized his diocese, and gave it a cathedral at Louth with a chapter of Augustinian canons. Once again Malachy was the maker of a diocese; and once again, in the interest of stability, he transgressed the letter of the Rathbreasail canons, while fulfilling their spirit. It was not till after the coming of the Anglo-Normans that the see was brought back to Clogher. Subsequently the county of Louth reverted to Armagh, and the diocese extended to the west. About the year 1250 its boundaries came to be what they now are.

In 1139, after settling the affairs of the diocese of Oriel, Malachy left Ireland on an important mission. It will be remembered that Gilbert had declared that no archbishop could exercise his functions till the Pope had sent him the pall. That was the current doctrine of the age. Now neither Cellach, nor Malachy, nor Gelasius, nor Malchus, nor his

successor at Cashel, had received that ornament. They had therefore, in the strict sense, no right to the title of archbishop. Malachy resolved to make request to the Pope in person for palls for the two Irish metropolitans. So he set out from Bangor for Rome. Of his journey it is unnecessary to say anything here.

At Rome Malachy was received by Pope Innocent II with great honour. He confirmed the erection of the metropolitan see of Cashel. But he politely declined to grant the palls. They must be demanded, he said, by a council of the bishops, clergy and magnates; and then they would be given.

But if the Pope refused Malachy's request, he bestowed on him an office, the securing of which we may conjecture to have been one of the purposes of his visit to Rome, though Saint Bernard does not say so. Gilbert, now old and infirm, had resigned the see of Limerick, and with it his legatine commission. Innocent made Malachy papal legate in his stead.

Thus Malachy returned to Ireland, still bishop of Down indeed, but virtually chief prelate of the Irish Church. For the following eight years he laboured with zeal and vigour. Saint Bernard unfortunately gives little information concerning the details of his administrative work as legate. But he relates one incident which suggests that in this period Malachy was instrumental in founding another diocese. He nominated and consecrated the first known bishop of Cork, not improbably with the intention that he should unite in his own person the two offices of coarb of Barre, founder of Cork, and diocesan bishop.

And in this connexion it is worth noticing that he was evidently on friendly terms with Nehemiah, the first known

bishop of the neighbouring diocese of Cloyne. If that diocese was also founded by him he once again violated the letter of the Rathbreasail canons, for by them Cloyne was included in the diocese of Emly.

In 1148 Malachy convened a synod at Inispatrick, an island opposite Skerries, Co. Dublin. This synod demanded the palls in due form, and sent Malachy to obtain them. But he got no further on his journey than Clairvaux. There, after celebrating Mass on Saint Luke's Day, he was taken ill of a fever; and there a fortnight later he died in the arms of Saint Bernard, on All Souls' Day, 2nd November, 1148.

Nevertheless the palls came. They were brought to Ireland by a legate specially commissioned by Pope Eugenius III, John Paparo, cardinal priest of Saint Laurence. A synod was held at Kells to receive them in March 1152, of which the joint presidents were Paparo, as *legatus a latere*, and Christian, first abbot of Mellifont, and now bishop of Lismore, who had lately succeeded Malachy as *legatus natus*.

Of this synod Keating gives a short account, abridged from the Annals of Clonenagh, from which he had also derived his knowledge of the proceedings at Rathbreasail. He preserves a list of the bishops who attended. It includes twenty-two names, if we count two vicars who represented absent bishops. There were besides, as Keating informs us, five bishops-elect. And there was certainly one bishop of a diocese who was neither present nor represented, Edan O'Kelly, bishop of Oriel. So it appears that in 1152 there were at least twenty-eight dioceses in Ireland - a number considerably larger than was contemplated at Rathbreasail. The increase in number is partly accounted for by the presence of the bishop of the recently formed diocese of Kilmore, the division of the diocese of Connor into Connor and Down, and, a most striking addition, the inclusion of

Gregory, bishop of Dublin, among the assembled prelates. It is remarkable that the bishop of Kells is not mentioned, though the synod was held in his own city. How was the bishop of Dublin induced to throw in his lot with the Irish Church? We shall see in a moment.

Much business was transacted at this Synod. But that which concerns us most nearly is the giving of the palls. Cardinal Paparo brought the Irish bishops more than they had asked for; more indeed than they desired. He presented, not two palls but four, Dublin and Tuam, as well as Armagh and Cashel, being recognized as archiepiscopal sees. This excessive generosity caused much displeasure among the Irish bishops. "For Ireland," says Keating, apparently paraphrasing the Annals of Clonenagh, "thought it enough to have a pall in the church of Armagh and a pall in Cashel; and particularly it was in spite of the church of Armagh and the church of Down that the other palls were given." The cause of this discontent is not far to seek. The chief gravamen no doubt was that Dublin was included among the four. The constant friction which had subsisted for many years between the diocese of Dublin and the Irish Church sufficiently explains the indignation of the archbishop of Armagh, aggravated by the fact that the creation of new archbishops imposed a limit upon his authority. It also enables us to understand why his displeasure was shared by the Irish generally. That a see whose bishops had behaved so haughtily in the past should, at the very moment of its entrance into the Irish Church, receive so signal an honour, long denied to Armagh and Cashel, and that in the person of its bishop it should be given jurisdiction over bishops whom till now it had treated with contempt, could not but be regarded as unreasonable, or even insulting. But on the other hand, recalling the early history of the Church in Dublin, we can comprehend why, in spite of all this, special favour was bestowed upon it. Dublin, as we have seen, was a

not too submissive suffragan of Canterbury. Its ambition was that its bishop should have the status of a metropolitan. The opportunity had come for gratifying its desire, and at the same time bringing it under the Irish ecclesiastical regime. The pall at once separated it from Canterbury and united it with Ireland. It was the price paid for its submission to the Primacy of Armagh. Gregory therefore became archbishop of Dublin, and had the right - which his predecessor had long before illegally assumed - to have the cross carried before him. With the gift of the pall Paparo bestowed upon him "the principal part of the bishopric of Glendalough as his diocese," promising him the remainder on the death of the bishop who then ruled it. All this was done, we are told, because it was fitting that the place "in which from ancient time had been the royal seat and head of Ireland," should be made a metropolitan see.

There was at last one Church in Ireland, which embraced within it not only the Celtic parts of the island, but all the Danish dioceses as well. And the whole Church was ruled by the bishops. The Reformation may not have been complete in every detail - there was indeed much left for the Anglo-Normans to do - but the Synod of Kells had set the crown on the work of the Irish reformers. And this consummation was mainly due to the wisdom and the untiring zeal of Saint Malachy of Armagh.

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